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ABSTRACT

At a time of high unemployment and increasingly constrained public resources, more and more attention is being focused on how to further the private sector's involvement in expanding opportunities for individuals, especially the hard-to-employ, to obtain long-term productive employment. Although at least 12 pieces of federal legislation that affect the educationally and economically disadvantaged are due to expire soon, and their renewal is not certain, there is a way to continue efforts to address the needs of the hard-to-employ. This way (1) places a greater reliance on the private sector; (2) reduces, but does not eliminate, the demand for public resources; (3) supports efforts to improve the nation's rate of productivity; and (4) continues to address the needs of the long-term unemployed. There should be a clear understanding by all involved--government, business, labor, and community groups--that any effective partnership must involve the leaders of the local business community. In the past, Private Industry Councils (PICs) have been used to fulfill the government-private industry partnership; however, problems with PICs must be overcome. It is crucial that the PICs involve top business leadership; provide independence, flexibility, and a stronger role for business; define accountability and responsibility; prepare for continuity; and avoid unnecessary regulation. All of these recommendations are predicated on sustained effective leadership, both public and private, and a national policy to reduce inflation and produce more stable economic growth. (KC)

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EMPLOYMENT POLICY FOR THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY: The Path of Progress

A Statement by the Program Committee of the Committee for Economic Development

June 1982

CED

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EMPLOYMENT POLICY FOR THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY: The Path of Progress

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CED PROGRAM STATEMENTS

The publication of this statement is authorized by the regulations of the Research and Policy Committee that empower the Program Committee to issue statements within the framework of the policies previously stated by the Research and Policy Committee.

Proposals in this statement are derived from principles expressed in two recent CED policy statements, *Jobs for the Hard-to-Employ: New Directions for a Public-Private Partnership* (1978) and *Public-Private Partnership: An Opportunity for Urban Communities* (1982).

This statement represents the views of the members of the Program Committee. The proposals are not necessarily endorsed by other Trustees of CED or by the advisors, contributors, staff members, or others associated with CED.

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FOREWORD

The Committee for Economic Development has long encouraged business to become more actively involved in addressing the problems of the hard-to-employ. In recent policy statements, we have stated that active participation in such efforts benefits not only the corporation itself, but also the social and economic fabric of the community in which it operates.

At a time of high unemployment and increasingly constrained public resources, more and more attention is being focused on how to further the private sector's involvement in expanding opportunities for individuals to obtain long-term productive employment, especially for the hard-to-employ. We believe that American business represents a large and creative resource for expanding effective pre-employment and job-readiness programs. While efforts to increase business' involvement have been undertaken in recent years, to date, they have only been partially successful. Too frequently, we believe, government efforts to increase business involvement in preparing individuals for work have not taken into account the way business really functions. Accordingly, these attempts have failed to develop programs that can make business a full partner committed to real success.

In this statement, we draw on guidelines recommended in two recent CED policy statements, *Jobs for the Hard-to-Employ: New Directions for a Public-Private Partnership* (January 1978) and *Public-Private Partnership: An Opportunity for Urban Communities* (February 1982). Each in itself is a significant and timely statement that policy makers can use to encourage effective and continuing business participation in meeting the employment and training needs of this nation's citizens.

This statement was prepared by Nathaniel M. Semple, CED's vice president and director of governmental affairs. Frank W. Schiff, vice president and chief economist, served as staff counselor and Claudia P. Feurey, director of information, served as project editor.

Franklin A. Lindsay
Chairman, Program Committee

EMPLOYMENT POLICY FOR THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY

Continued investment in human capital is a necessary part of a successful long-term policy to reduce inflation and assure economic growth. If we are to increase our lagging rate of productivity growth and restore the U.S. competitive balance, the nation requires a properly educated and adaptable labor force, geared to the economic and demographic realities of the 1980s and beyond. The Committee for Economic Development (CED) is now engaged in a series of studies touching various aspects of this complex problem; to date, our most intensive focus has been the 1978 policy statement on jobs for the hard-to-employ.[1] We feel that particular attention needs to be devoted to those who, for economic, educational, or other reasons, such as being disabled or handicapped, are not able to participate as fully productive members of the economy.

Two contemporary forces in particular are affecting what public policy can and should do for the hard-to-employ. One force is the current recession, which has dramatically slowed the total number of new jobs being created. Between 1980 and 1981, there was an actual *decline* in total employment of nearly one-half million. Even where job creation is occurring, it is often of a level of sophistication beyond the reach of the low-skilled or undereducated. A second is that the nation is concurrently undergoing a fundamental reappraisal of the relationship of government to society, and this reappraisal directly affects the programs and policies that deal with investments in human capital and with efforts to address the needs of the hard-to-employ.

Currently, at least 12 pieces of federal legislation that affect the educationally and economically disadvantaged expire in either fiscal year 1982 or fiscal year 1983.[2] Many of these programs are undergoing substantial revision or are being reduced in size and scope. Whatever the outcome of the legislative process, we believe that there is a way to continue efforts to address the needs of the hard-to-employ that:

- places a greater reliance on the private sector

[1]/See Committee for Economic Development policy statement, *Jobs for the Hard-to-Employ: New Directions for a Public-Private Partnership*, January, 1978.

[2]/See Appendix, page 11.

- reduces, but does not eliminate, the demand for public resources
- supports efforts to improve the nation's rate of productivity
- continues to address the needs of the long-term unemployed.

American business represents a tremendous opportunity for the hard-to-employ, not only because it is the main source of the nation's current and future employment, but also because it is among our greatest available training resources. Traditionally, government has used two approaches to encourage business to address the labor-market problems of the disadvantaged. The first approach is indirect: the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit; economic development programs such as the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program; and a variety of tax relief measures on property, income, and payroll expenses adopted by state and local officials to encourage the hiring of disadvantaged workers. The most recent example of this approach is contained in the proposed "enterprise zone" legislation, which would provide tax credits on both business income and wages paid to low-income employees in selected hard-pressed urban areas, and would eliminate certain government regulations on enterprises choosing to invest in a designated "enterprise zone."

The second method of involving business is direct, primarily contractual arrangements (on-the-job training, for example) or direct wage subsidies.

While successful in several respects, the overall business involvement in federal employment and training programs has been mixed, contributing to the ambivalent attitude currently felt by some policy makers about continuing such efforts, at least in their present form. In our view, this problem stems from a fundamental failure to understand the dynamics of business' interaction with the labor market and an equal failure to understand fully what will encourage business to participate more actively. We believe that American business, both large and small, is willing to do its part in providing jobs and training for the hard-to-employ. The results of our 1978 study, in which we analyzed the efforts of over 80 firms involved in the training of the hard-to-employ, confirm this. But more careful attention needs to be given to the principles of business participation if policy makers are to encourage greater and more sustained business involvement. This issue will become even more urgent if policy makers *require* business involvement as a condition for federal support of local employment and training programs.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

There should be a clear understanding by all parties concerned—government, business, labor, and community groups—that any effective partnership must involve the leaders of the *local* business community. Business needs to be given the responsibility for carrying out meaningful tasks, not to be constrained by excessively detailed government reviews and approvals. Unless those in the business community are given a real and

substantial role, they simply will not devote the time and resources needed for a successful outcome.

In our 1978 policy statement on the hard-to-employ, CED proposed several specific ways in which these prescriptions could be translated into action:

- A major and sustained personal involvement of top business leadership, both nationally and locally.
- Use of local intermediary organizations involving business leadership. Such organizations could provide job placement, reduce the red tape usually connected with federally supported employment and training efforts, and back the program up with pre-employment training, job-readiness activities, job-search assistance, and counseling for the hard-to-employ.
- Sufficient flexibility to allow for a wide variety of organizational arrangements from city to city, adapted to the special needs of each locality.
- Freedom from highly detailed and prescriptive federal regulations.

More recently, CED has analyzed those elements that underlie successful public-private partnerships in local economic-development efforts, and included the results in the policy statement, *Public-Private Partnership: An Opportunity for Urban Communities* (February 1982). We found that, in addition to the principles in the 1978 study on the hard-to-employ, successful public-private partnerships between the private sector and local governments involve the following:

- A civic culture that fosters a sense of community and encourages citizen participation rooted in practical concern for the community.
- A commonly accepted vision of the community that takes into consideration strengths and weaknesses, involves key groups in a process of identifying community goals, and demonstrates a common commitment to meeting those goals.
- Building-block civic organizations that blend the self-interest of members with the broader interest of the community, and translate them into effective action.
- A network among key groups that encourages communication among leaders of important segments and facilitates mediation of differences.
- Leadership and an ability to nurture "civic entrepreneurs," those whose knowledge, imagination, and energy are directed toward enterprises that benefit the community.
- Continuity in policy, including an adaptability to changing circumstances that fosters confidence in individual and group enterprises.

We believe that these principles are important to bear in mind when reviewing recent attempts to encourage private-sector participation in addressing the employment problems of the disadvantaged.

INSTITUTION BUILDING: THE PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCILS

Established as part of the 1978 amendments to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), the Private Sector Initiative Program was the first major effort to establish a means of involving business at the local level in addressing the needs of the hard-to-employ. This program required, as a condition for receiving part of their CETA allocation, that local governments serving as prime sponsors establish private-sector councils. The purpose of the councils was to enlist greater involvement of business in the design and delivery of local employment programs.

While we believe it is premature to evaluate the Private Industry Councils (PICs), the available evidence suggests that to date, the overall results have fallen short of original hopes. In some cases, the councils have clearly made a difference by gearing programs more effectively to private-sector needs and, at the same time, opening up more private-sector opportunities to the long-term unemployed. But too often, the PICs do not appear to have broken much new ground in program design and implementation. Although we recognize that the establishment of a new institution takes time, particularly when it is the first to involve business actively in establishing employment and training policies and programs, we believe that many PICs suffer several problems:

- *Formation by mandate.* Currently, the Department of Labor requires that all localities serving as CETA prime sponsors establish PICs. As a result, in a good number of localities, local elected officials have established PICs merely to conform to regulation--and have not enlisted meaningful involvement from the business community. These PICs often do not have the credibility that they enjoy in areas where they were created in the context of a genuine public-private partnership.
- *Selection of business representatives.* The business representatives on the PICs are unilaterally chosen by local elected officials; often, individuals who are content to simply "go along" with the prime sponsor's program—without acting independently—have been selected. Although there are a good many cases in which business participation has been strong, the arrangement does not *insure* that effective business leadership will be represented.
- *Lack of control over financial and staff resources.* While there are some notable exceptions, the PICs do not, as a rule, have independent staffs and thus are unable to make truly independent judgments on policy and programs. In addition, most do not have direct control over their

financial resources, which to date has been the responsibility of local elected officials; this also undermines the ability of the PICs to make independent decisions.

- *Limited involvement.* Business often sees PICs as having the capacity for too little impact beyond what is mandated under Title VII of CETA to justify its active participation. In some cases, businesses do not even know of the existence of the PICs. In others, they are viewed as just one of a plethora of local-level boards, councils, committees, commissions, and other employment, education, and training groups.
- *No definition of purpose, authority, or responsibility.* PICs often do not understand how they are supposed to relate to other organizations, how much authority they have, or to what extent and to whom they are accountable. This happens when public officials fail to allow PICs to function in the manner Congress originally intended. This kind of inconsistency leads to disillusionment among the participants, and can undermine confidence in the PIC and in CETA throughout the community.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

We believe these conditions can be alleviated to a great degree by adhering to the recommendations in our earlier policy statements. However, the recent experience with the PIC arrangement calls for some further elaboration of those ideas. Specifically, it will be important to focus on fulfilling the following principles.

INVOLVEMENT OF TOP BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

It is crucial that the top business leadership of the community become involved in local PICs. This will require a selection process that can prevent public officials from choosing only those "business" representatives who will do their own bidding. We recognize the difficulty inherent in defining what that leadership is and the danger in complicating the process unnecessarily, but we feel that these problems could both be overcome with a minimum of thought and planning. One way this could be done would be to ask existing local civic groups that either meet certain requirements or are willing to adjust to such requirements to submit separate proposals for the organization and operation of the private sector program to be financed in whole or in part by the government. Another would be to limit the local elected officials to appointing representatives from a pool of individuals who had been nominated by business, civic, trade, or general-purpose organizations, and to require that all candidates be either chief executive officers of major firms, chief operating officers of local subsidiaries or operating divisions of major firms, or the owner of a local small- or medium-size business.

It is equally important for business to continue its commitment after council members have been selected. One way to encourage this would be to prohibit proxy voting and to require that those selected be present to

record their votes on policy and program decisions. Another would be for business to support the operation of the programs financially, either through contributions or other suitable arrangements. For example, we believe there would be a distinct advantage for business to pay the salaries of core staff. This would assure that the personnel who would be responsible for developing policy and long-term strategic planning would be accountable to the business leadership that hired them, not to a public institution. However, the bulk of operational funds must come from the government because expenses will almost always be greater than the resources available from the private sector.

INDEPENDENCE, FLEXIBILITY, AND A STRONGER ROLE FOR BUSINESS

Although we recognize the need for broad community representation, we believe that any organization that purports to represent business should be primarily made up of top level business representatives. In addition, business needs a greater degree of independence from existing governmental institutions. In order to be an effective "partner," business should have sufficient staff and financial resources to make independent judgments on policy design and implementation. We believe that any such organization should also have the ability to determine what role the businesses involved are willing and able to play in planning and carrying out the program. This role should not be prescribed in federal statutes or departmental regulations. All decisions should be part of a joint agreement worked out with the appropriate public officials, and should include:

- mutually agreed upon goals for the program
- performance standards
- policies governing program operation
- a clear delineation of authority and accountability for the expenditure of public funds.

Such agreements must, of course, conform to the intent and purpose of federal requirements.

FREEDOM FROM UNNECESSARY GOVERNMENT REGULATION

We urge that federal guidelines avoid detailed and inflexible operational or performance standards, which we feel would discourage business participation. Instead, federal requirements should be broad enough to allow local public officials and business leaders to adjust already-established local governmental and business practices to new operations.

We also believe there should be no major commitment of public funds, outside of those required to set the above process in motion, until an agreement has been reached on these matters between the public officials and business organizations. This will require a period of transition in which current operations should be allowed to continue until arrangements are worked out. If an agreement cannot be made, we believe the governor or

the U.S. secretary of labor, as the case may be, should determine the nature and scope of the program to be operated in the locality, or whether any programs at all should be implemented.

DEFINITION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

It is especially important that clear lines of accountability and responsibility be established for both the public and the private partners, and that reporting requirements be minimized. At the very least, regulations should be sufficiently flexible to permit the PICs to use external, nongovernmental post-audits by certified public accounting firms in accordance with current business practices. Any necessary government audits should be post-audits limited to review of the CPA-firm audits. In addition, we believe that reporting requirements should be either semi-annual or annual to minimize the burden that more frequent reports have had on staff resources and program operation. Also, we believe that some arrangement that clearly defines the limits of personal liability for board members—either liability insurance or appropriate contractual language—should be included in any agreement. Private board members should be held responsible for malfeasance, but must be protected from personal liability for alleged errors in judgment.

PREPARATION FOR CONTINUITY AND PREDICTABILITY

Once agreed upon and approved by local leaders and private groups, the local private program should be allowed to operate independently of further *federal* government interference. One of the great impediments to sustained business and local public involvement is the federal government's penchant for continually changing the rules. Rules and regulations should be altered only by mutual consent of both the local public officials and the private sector institution. In addition, we urge that program funding be more timely than it has been in the past to allow business sufficient time to plan and allocate resources. The same principle should apply if the states assume federal responsibilities in this area.

COROLLARY ISSUES

In addition to the principles enumerated above, we believe there are other important issues that should be considered if the environment for a true public-private partnership is to be established and maintained.

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL FOCUS

In our recently released study on public-private partnerships in urban areas, we found that the more successful of these ventures tended to have developed at the local level. This is not to say that such partnerships do not or cannot occur at the state level; but by and large, *business* becomes involved primarily with the communities in which it has facilities, and the labor markets in which its employees live. We found that a sense of "community" was an important factor in stimulating active business participation in community projects.

Accordingly, we feel that communities of significant size should have the opportunity to work out a joint plan with local businesses without interference by other governmental institutions. Although we recognize that defining exactly what is "significant" is at best an arbitrary exercise, we believe areas that cover a clearly recognizable labor market should have the opportunity to participate.

TARGETING RESOURCES

We agree that employment and training policy should continue to be targeted toward the hard-to-employ, and that efforts to address the needs of dislocated workers and industries experiencing critical skill shortages are more properly the subject of a separate approach. In this respect, we believe that the hard-to-employ are, indeed, hard-to-employ irrespective of age. Some of the nation's most intractable problems involve older workers. We also recognize the great need to address the problems of young people. Not only do young people constitute the most important investment in the future, but the failure of young people to compete successfully in the labor market incurs numerous other social costs, such as a high incidence of crime. But we would urge policy makers not to hamstring the ability of localities to determine what they perceive to be their most important need. If a certain percentage of funds are mandated for youth programs, we urge that such a mandate include a provision that would enable localities to allocate resources to other areas, should the specific conditions warrant that kind of action.

INVOLVING THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY

Lack of education is the most serious impediment to entry-level employment. Recent studies indicate that an alarming number of Americans—including a high percentage of high school graduates—are entering the world of work functionally illiterate. A recent survey by the Conference Board indicates that 37 percent of the companies surveyed have found it necessary to engage in some form of remedial education for their current employees, particularly their new entrants.

Traditionally, education, employment, and training policies have been separate. We feel that these policies should be integrated at all levels of government—federal, state, and local. It would be a step backward if current changes in employment and training policies were not accompanied by equal efforts to integrate education policy with them. We believe business can and should become more involved in integrating these efforts at the local level. The private-sector institutions that may become involved in employment and training policy should serve as a catalyst. But without the involvement of education leaders at all levels of government, these efforts can only have a minimal impact.

BUSINESS PARTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS

We believe it would be useful, particularly in the area of establishing program goals and performance, if private-sector institutions similar to those

we recommend at the local level were to be established at the federal and state levels. Here, they would advise the appropriate federal and state agencies on all matters related to education, employment, and training policy.

IMPROVED INFORMATION EXCHANGE

There is an immense variety of labor-market data available that can be useful in local planning of employment and training policies. Currently, however, there is little coordination of this data: its collection and dissemination is fragmented among numerous governmental and private institutions. Sound policy judgments by local officials and business leaders would be facilitated by better coordination of these sources by labor-market data. We would support policies at the national level that would encourage this kind of coordination.

IN CONCLUSION

None of these recommendations will have much significance if there is no sustained, effective leadership, both public and private. CED has long encouraged business to take a more active role in employment and training policy. We realize it is often difficult to measure the returns from such involvement, but we feel that the need for it is compelling. And the evidence is convincing that such involvement has a very positive effect, not only on the competitive position of a corporation but also on the general well-being of the community upon which it depends for support. We believe that the recommendations we have proposed could go a long way in assuring local business leaders that there is indeed a worthwhile reason for their participation.

Finally, we recognize that any efforts to address the needs of the long-term unemployed cannot succeed unless accompanied by a national policy to reduce inflation and produce more stable economic growth. Poor economic conditions discourage active business participation in employment and training programs. Business leaders in communities that continue to suffer poor economic performance will always be less likely to participate in those programs, even if the national economic picture should brighten. So any employment policy, we believe, will require a balanced mix between the kinds of monetary and fiscal policies that encourage increasing productivity and investment in plant and equipment, technological innovation, and human capital. But at the same time, both public and private leaders should recognize that any resolution to our current economic dilemma must include a commitment to serving the needs of the disadvantaged. We believe that the recommendations we have outlined will help achieve that end.

APPENDIX

REAUTHORIZATION SCHEDULE FOR LAWS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Law	Expiration Date	Sponsoring Committee	Department/Agency
Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA)		Senate Labor and Human Resources	Labor (ETA)
• Titles I, II, III, V, VI VII, and VIII	September 30, 1982		
• Title IV (Youth)	June 5, 1981		
Targeted Jobs Tax Credit	December 31, 1981	Senate Finance, House Ways and Means	Labor/Treasury
HIH Tax Credit	None	Senate Finance, House Ways and Means	Labor/Treasury
Economic Opportunity and Community Services Act	September 30, 1981	Senate Labor and Human Resources House Education and Labor	Community Services Administration
*Vocational Education Act	September 30, 1982	Senate Labor and Human Resources House Education and Labor	Education
*Career Education Incentive Act	September 30, 1983	Senate Labor and Human Resources House Education and Labor	Education
*Elementary and Secondary Education Act	September 30, 1983	Senate Labor and Human Resources House Education and Labor	Education
*Higher Education Act	September 30, 1981	Senate Labor and Human Resources House Education and Labor	Education
*Adult Education Act	September 30, 1983	Senate Labor and Human Resources House Education and Labor	Education

*These laws are forward-funded and are usually reauthorized one year in advance. The General Education Provisions Act provides for an automatic one-year extension of education bills in the event reauthorization is not completed in time to assure continuity of funding. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, extends this to two years and authorizes appropriations to be available on a fiscal- rather than calendar-year basis.

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